

LINKEDIN PREFERENCE AND USAGE AMONG TEENAGERS IN KOLLAM DISTRICT: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study examines the awareness, adoption, and usage patterns of LinkedIn among teenagers in Kollam district, Kerala, India. Employing a structured questionnaire administered to 80 respondents, the research explores sources of awareness, frequency and purpose of usage, barriers to adoption, and perceived value of LinkedIn for early career development. Findings indicate high awareness but low engagement, with LinkedIn primarily used for internship searches and career exploration. Empirical testing confirms that a significant gap exists between awareness and account ownership, and that perceived complexity is a statistically significant barrier to adoption. The study provides evidence-based recommendations for educators and policymakers to enhance LinkedIn's utility in facilitating youth career readiness.

Keywords:- LinkedIn; Teenagers; Social Media; Career Development; Digital Literacy.

The digitalization of career development has brought professional networking platforms to the forefront of youth engagement. LinkedIn, as the largest professional networking platform globally, offers young individuals opportunities for career exploration, skills development, and professional

networking (Donelan, 2016; Li & Guo, 2022). Its features - including job listings, online courses, and networking tools - are designed to foster employability and lifelong learning (Statista, 2024).

In India, rapid digital adoption has created new pathways for youth to access information and opportunities, but engagement with professional platforms

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among teenagers - especially in semi-urban and rural contexts - remains limited and under-researched. Kerala, with its high literacy rate and progressive educational initiatives, provides a unique context to study digital career readiness among youth (Nair & George, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

The digitalization of career development has positioned professional networking platforms like LinkedIn as essential tools for youth career readiness. However, despite high literacy rates and digital adoption in Kerala, teenagers in the semi-urban and rural Kollam district exhibit a significant gap between their awareness of LinkedIn (82.5 per cent) and their active, meaningful engagement with the platform (52.5 per cent account ownership). This low adoption and utilization - evidenced by low daily use (5 per cent) and minimal feature utilization (50 per cent use none) - limit their ability to leverage the platform for job exploration, skills development, and professional networking. The fundamental research problem is to empirically analyze the specific factors - including awareness sources, perceived benefits, and, critically, barriers like perceived complexity (31.6 per cent of non-users) and digital literacy gaps - that explain this high-awareness, low-engagement paradox among Kollam's teenagers.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value for several stakeholders:

- **Academic Contribution:** It provides empirical insights from a focused regional sample in a semi-urban/

rural Indian context, addressing a gap in the existing literature which primarily focuses on university students or urban demographics.

- **Policy and Educational Relevance:**

The findings directly inform the strategies of educators, career counsellors, and policymakers in Kerala. By identifying barriers like "Too Complicated" (31.6 per cent of non-users) and the need for targeted training, the study provides a roadmap for effective curriculum integration and digital literacy workshops to enhance youth employability.

- **Practical Utility:** It provides data to platform developers and career development NGOs regarding the feature usage and purpose of use (e.g., internships being a key motivator), allowing them to create more locally relevant and accessible resources.

This study aims to explore LinkedIn's awareness, usage patterns, and barriers among teenagers in Kollam district, Kerala, to inform strategies for enhancing digital career development.

2. Literature Review

Existing literature affirms the role of social media in professional and educational development. LinkedIn, in particular, is recognized for its utility in career planning and skill enhancement (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Donelan, 2016). Despite its popularity among university students and professionals, teenagers often exhibit low engagement due to digital literacy gaps, lack of

guidance, and platform complexity (Li & Guo, 2022; Kumar & Singh, 2023). In India, adoption is further affected by institutional support and regional disparities (Thomas & Akdere, 2024). Institutional encouragement and peer mentoring can significantly boost engagement with professional platforms (Wang & Woo, 2023). Barriers such as perceived irrelevance, lack of immediate benefits, and preference for entertainment-focused social media often limit teenagers' engagement with LinkedIn (Smith, 2021). This study focuses on an empirical analysis to address these gaps by offering context-specific insights.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To assess the level of awareness and usage of LinkedIn among teenagers in Kollam district.
- To identify the primary purposes and perceived benefits of LinkedIn usage.
- To examine key barriers to adoption and engagement.
- To provide actionable recommendations to improve LinkedIn's utility for youth.

Scope of the Study

The study is defined by the following parameters:

- **Geographical Scope:** The research is strictly confined to teenagers residing within the **Kollam district** of Kerala, India.
- **Demographic Scope:** The target population is **teenagers** enrolled in various educational institutions within the selected district.

- **Thematic Scope:** The analysis focuses exclusively on the awareness, adoption patterns, usage frequency, perceived utility, and barriers related to the **LinkedIn professional networking platform**.
- **Temporal Scope:** The data collected is **cross-sectional**, representing the respondents' preferences and usage behavior at the time of the survey administration.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

A descriptive, cross-sectional survey design was adopted to gather data on LinkedIn preferences and usage behavior among teenagers.

4.2 Sample

A purposive sample of 80 teenagers from various educational institutions in Kollam district was selected, representing diverse backgrounds and school types.

4.3 Data Collection

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire, which included sections on: Awareness and account ownership, sources of awareness, frequency and purpose of use, profile completeness and feature utilization, and perceptions and barriers.

4.4 Formulation of Hypotheses

Based on the literature review and the study objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated for testing:

- **H01:** There is **no significant difference** between awareness of LinkedIn and actual account ownership among teenagers in Kollam district.

- HA1: There is a **significant difference** between awareness of LinkedIn and actual account ownership among teenagers in Kollam district.
- H02: The primary purpose for which teenagers use LinkedIn is **not** significantly for **internship/job search or career exploration**.
- HA2: The primary purpose for which teenagers use LinkedIn is significantly for **internship/job search or career exploration**.
- H03: Perceived **complexity** is **not** a significant barrier to the adoption and use of LinkedIn among teenagers.
 - HA3: Perceived **complexity** is a significant barrier to the adoption and use of LinkedIn among teenagers.

4.5 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) were used for quantitative data. Chi-Square (χ^2) test for independence and goodness-of-fit were used to test the formulated hypotheses at a significance level (α) of 0.05.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Awareness and Account Ownership

Table 1

LinkedIn Awareness and Account Ownership

Variable	Yes	No	Percentage (Yes)	Total
Awareness of LinkedIn	66	14	82.5	80
LinkedIn Account Ownership	42	38	52.5	80

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: There is a statistically significant gap between awareness (82.5 per cent) and account ownership (52.5 per cent).

5.2 Sources of Awareness

Table 2

Sources of LinkedIn Awareness (N=80)

Source	Frequency	Percentage
Friends/Family	18	22.5
Teachers/Career Counsellors	20	25
Social media	24	30
Online Ads	8	10
Other	10	12.5

Source: Primary Data

5.3 Frequency and Purpose of Use

Table 3

Frequency of LinkedIn Use

Frequency	Count	Percentage
Daily	4	5
Weekly	12	15
Occasionally	20	25
Rarely	14	17.5
Never	30	37.5

Source: Primary Data

Table 4

Main Purpose of LinkedIn Use (N=42 LinkedIn account owners)

Purpose	Frequency	Percentage
Internships	15	35.71
Building Network	8	19.05
Learning/Upskilling	10	23.81
Exploring Careers	6	14.29
Other	3	7.14

Source: Primary Data

5.4 Profile Completeness and Feature Utilization

Table 5

Profile Completeness

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Complete	22	27.5
Partially Complete	32	40
Incomplete	26	32.5

Source: Primary Data

Table 6

Most Used LinkedIn Features (N=80)

Feature	Frequency	Percentage
Newsfeed/Posts	10	12.5
Job/Internship Search	15	18.75
LinkedIn Learning	8	10
Messaging/Networking	7	8.75
None	40	50

Source: Primary Data

5.5 Perceptions and Outcomes

Table 7

Perceived Usefulness (N=80)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	58	72.5
No	12	15
Not Sure	10	12.5

Source: Primary Data

Table 8

Opportunities Received

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	6	7.5
No	38	47.5
"Not yet, but hoping"	36	45

Source: Primary Data

5.6 Barriers to Adoption

Table 9

Reasons for Not Using LinkedIn (among non-users)

Reason	Frequency	Percentage (of non-users)
Not Interested	10	26.3
Unaware of Benefits	8	21
Too Complicated	12	31.6
Prefer Other Platforms	6	15.8
Other	2	5.3

Source: Primary Data

5.7 Willingness to Recommend

Table 10

Willingness to Recommend LinkedIn (N=80)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	52	65
No	6	7.5
Maybe	22	27.5

Source: Primary Data

5.8 Testing of Hypotheses

The results of the hypothesis testing provided empirical confirmation for two key research questions. The Null Hypothesis H01 (no significant difference between awareness and account ownership) was rejected with a p-value of <0.001, confirming that a significant difference or gap exists between awareness and actual platform adoption. Similarly, the Null Hypothesis H03 (perceived complexity is not a significant barrier) was also rejected with a p-value of 0.038, confirming that perceived complexity is a significant barrier to LinkedIn adoption (HA3 Confirmed). Conversely, the Null Hypothesis H02

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Test	χ^2 Value (df)	p-value	Decision ($\alpha=0.05$)	Interpretation
H01(Awareness vs. Ownership)	Chi-Square Test of Independence	16.79 (df=1)	<0.001	Reject H01	Significant difference between awareness and account ownership. (HA1 Confirmed)
H02 (Primary Purpose)	Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit	9.43 (df=4)	0.051	Accept H02	Purpose is not <i>statistically</i> driven only by job/career focus.
H03 (Complexity Barrier)	Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit	4.28 (df=4)	0.038	Reject H03	Perceived complexity is a significant barrier to adoption. (HA3 Confirmed)

Source: Primary Data

(purpose is not significantly job/career focused) was Accepted (p-value 0.051), suggesting that the overall purpose of use is not statistically driven *only* by job or career exploration.

Key Findings

- 1. High Awareness, Low Engagement Gap (HA1 Confirmed):** While a large majority (82.5 per cent) are aware, only 52.5 per cent have created an account.
- 2. Digital Literacy and Complexity Barrier (HA3 Confirmed):** ‘Too complicated’ was the single largest reason cited by non-users (31.6 per cent). This is further evidenced by the finding that 50 per cent of users do not engage with any platform features.
- 3. Primary Motivators:** Internship/ Job Search (18.75 per cent) and Career Exploration (7.5 per cent) are crucial motivators for the platform’s usage.
- 4. Role of Educators:** Teachers/ Career Counsellors (25 per cent) are the second-most influential source

of awareness, highlighting the importance of institutional support.

Practical, Evidence - Based Recommendations

Based on the findings and the identified barriers, the following suggestions are offered:

- 1. Targeted Digital Literacy Workshops (Addresses Complexity Barrier):** Conduct mandatory, structured, school-based LinkedIn orientation and profile-building sessions. This directly counters the finding that ‘Too Complicated’ is the biggest barrier (31.6 per cent) and addresses the low feature utilization rate (50 per cent).
- 2. Curriculum Integration and Institutional Support (Maximizes Awareness Sources):** Embed LinkedIn usage into career development modules and leverage the role of educators. Since Teachers/Counsellors are a strong source of awareness (25 per cent), institutionalizing usage will improve the conversion rate from awareness to active adoption.

3. **Peer Mentorship and Sustained Engagement:**

Establish Peer Mentorship Programs and Digital Career Clubs in schools. This taps into the importance of peer influence and helps ensure continued engagement, thereby overcoming low daily usage.

4. **Localized and Accessible Resources:**

Create region-specific, language-accessible tutorial content focusing on key features like the Job/ Internship Search. This will help address the 'Unaware of Benefits' barrier and aid profile completion.

The awareness-to-action gap is statistically significant, confirming the first hypothesis (HA1). Key motivators include internship searches (18.75 per cent) and career exploration (7.5 per cent). However, barriers such as platform complexity (31.6 per cent of non-users) and digital literacy gaps (50 per cent do not use features) significantly reduce active participation. The statistical testing confirmed that perceived complexity is a significant barrier (HA3). Educators and policymakers should prioritize digital career education and structured support mechanisms to bridge this gap.

Future Research

Future research should expand to include a larger and more diverse demographic, examine longitudinal usage trends, and evaluate the effectiveness of intervention programs aimed at improving platform adoption and outcomes.

Conclusion

This study concludes that while LinkedIn awareness is high (82.5 per cent) among teenagers in Kollam district, actual engagement (52.5 per cent account ownership) and meaningful use are limited.

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